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**The past and future of Hungarian
cultural institutions on Szeklerland**

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The presentation of the history of an institution, the tracing the different stages of its development, the original aim of its formation and the comparison with the present/actual state of it is a noble task, especially if this discussed institution, collection belongs to another country now. Although the two libraries presented in my study nowadays exist outside the Hungarian borders they are determinative characters of the Hungarian culture, education. We can find a lot of common and different features in their history. Considering their importance they certainly can not be measured by the same scale because in contrast with the Szekler National Museum, which is an independent institution, the Scientific Library is only a collection which was never independent. It functioned as a part of a school and later on as a part of several institutions. That's why the two parts of the paper lack proportion. The first part is a history of an institution full of sudden changes, the second one is a little bit calmer, a more balanced collection-history extended with schoolhistory data.

The question may be put by right. How much did the examined institutions succeed in holding on in the storms of history, how much could they protect their Hungarian character? What was the price of being able to serve the interests of the Szekler-Hungarian community according to their original aims?

The history of the Szekler National Museum is adventurous, full of changes and challenges. It can be stated that the history, development of the institution beside the actual social, political, economical situation was always dependent on its director. The foundation, the travail of its formation, the permanent quarrel of the competing szekler counties, the debate on the legal and local questions is not unique and is not surprising. On Szeklerland Szekler-Hungarians lived and live, why might one contradict that sad Hungarian characteristic that interests and counter-interests divide those who are to make decisions. The system of rules of the Szekler National Museum perfectly fits the canon of the Hungarian institution-history, at least what concerns the beginnings. It is only a detail, that during the 120 years of its history, such carnival elements appeared on its scene that threw positive light neither on the management of the institution nor on the attitude of its maintainer community. A small provincial and insignificant collection and an enthusiastic

autodidact were needed to give birth to it. The beginning was not easy: officialdom had already functioned by then, the suitable forums, people, the offering opportunities must be looked for even then. This is not surprising and says no novelty. The surprising thing in it is how persistently, with stubborn decision and firm conviction had the two people marched along the way indicated by themselves. It also appears to be only a detail, that time always washes the insignificant one away, only the name of the greater one remains and keeps the significance of his deed. The name, Zathurecky Emilia, is known by everybody, while Vasady Nagy Gyula lies in a markless grave in the cemetery in Sepsiszentgyörgy. But this phase perfectly fits the canon, too.

In Hungarian times, with Hungarian roots, with stubborn Szekler decision, in the seventies of the nineteenth century, after the conciliation it was not an impossibility to give birth to a new institution. The bigger problem was how to win the sympathy of the maintainer community, and to make the three Szekler counties represent the same policy in this. After a long battle there arrived a very learned expert who sacrificed his own scientific carrier. It is also a Hungarian characteristic that the town could not appreciate it in a proper way, so due to its negative attitude Nagy Géza was cast out. Nagy Géza, who tried to lift the museum out of the anonymity of the provincialism. But this also fits the canon, it is not surprising at all. But it might not be so obvious that such a scientific institution started to function which in a few decades succeeds in obtaining its rightful place. And step by step it managed to get the attention of the Hungarian academic.

László Ferenc's personality was already acceptable for the local community, and what is more important, for the Hungarian science, too. And this is a change in the life of the institution. László brought into this little town lying far from the capital that kind of mentality which was a characteristic of Kolozsvár, Budapest and the big cities of Europe. László was a great expert who put into orbit Nagy Géza's work and conception. On the top of this fulfilment there stands the national and international appreciation. László was a learned man who produced scientific achievements meant to fortify both the fame of his museum and town and the recognition of his professional work. But he alone was not enough for the real fulfilment, he needed a companion who could lobby for the institution, who could assert interests thanks to his strong personality. This man was called Csutak Vilmos. Both of them had realized that working seriously is possible only in decent conditions. They placed huge work into setting up a new building which really put the collections into decent conditions. This building was constructed with the help of the state and the local communities. In this phase the history of the museum deviates from the general influential principle. He took part in the wave of establishing new institutions based on Hungarian nationalistic ideas, but only because he, asking help from the Hungarian state, wanted to give home to the

already existing collection. He also added to it his own goods and the sacrifices of the maintainer community. It is incontestable that the bigger part of the expenses was covered by the state, but it is also beyond dispute that the town and the environs made sacrifices for this construction. That's why it is so painful, maybe unfair that in a few months after the move, the war broke out which beyond its destructions created such a world in which the ethnic Hungarians could survive only with difficulty.

In a particular way the period between the two world wars is, despite the conditions, the most prosperous in the history of the Szekler National Museum. It is an era full of contradictions, since the conditions had changed in such a way that in another case they may have even caused its winding-up. Breaking with the Hungarian continuity, forced into the frame of a new country, doomed to a minority life on a Romanian territory, the work is almost unbelievable what Csutak Vilmos and the name of his group hallmark. All of Csutak's human and professional greatness becomes visible here. He totally agrees with Klebersberg's ideas, thoughts, that the only weapon of the Hungarian community is culture and knowledge. He skilfully takes advantage of his Romanian professional and political relations, he immediately continues his carrier in such a way that he never denies his original aims, his Hungarian institutional life. And this is a very huge result. He, out of the destructions caused by the war, set up a scientific institution, which chose the ways of the already founded and excellent professionalism. All of this suits the requirements of the new empire. The fruits of Csutak's work keeps bearing interests for a long time, as after his death the museum made profit from his work started. The period of interreigning is only a transition to an era full of contradictions which ends with tragedy.

Herepei János's personality also left its mark on the institution, chiefly on the life of the collections. Herepei took the spirit of Kolozsvár to the counties, which spirit was not always in agreement with the Szekler ideas. Here starts a very humiliating, unjust debate, fight, which hiding behind the mask of science is nothing else but the acquisition of the leadership. According to the conception of some people from Kolozsvár the scientific centre of Transylvania can not be else but Kolozsvár itself. Sepsiszentgyörgy, on the other hand, rightly demanded for the museum to be the centre of the Szekler scientific researches. And this is completely obvious. This was a debate which led nowhere, full of carnival elements. While the reigning Romanian party looks at this fight from lodge history goes on. A new takeover was happening due to which most of the Hungarian territories found their way back to the original homeland. Herepei's big mistake was that in this situation he was not able to put forward interests being required by the actual conditions. He was a typical official who carried out the orders without thinking of the possible consequences of them. A

direct consequence of this was that in the rescuing activity of the second world war, in 1944 the bigger part of the collections came to nothing, it was destroyed.

This was a great blow to the museum. Lying almost in ruins it fell into a newer historical trap, into a newer minority existence, which already hid in itself much bigger dangers than the former one. The museum had not been following the usual canon for long. It had its own particular way, own fate, and the people being at the head of it were also very special. But somehow they always found the light at the end of the tunnel. In a very interesting way it always managed to collect oneself and was proud of being a Szekler museum with Hungarian roots.

The changeover to the new, once known Romanian side is not simple, taking into account that the attitude of the other side is more solid, more insistent and there is no Csutak any longer who could manage this in a skilful way. Szabédi László's person is a kind of solution to a lot of things but not to all of them. Szabédi's party affiliation helped in that political situation, but it is another question to where it lent in the end. During his two-year stay in Sepsiszentgyörgy he laid down a legal ground, but there was no professionalism at all. How could there have even been when in the new political situation, in the shadow of his great ancestors, a poet came to the fore of the institution, who beyond all these, had a firm political standpoint. It is difficult to decide how much this political attitude, the unambiguous expression of opinions helped or did harm to the museum. In the mirror of the events happened later I tend to say that they did not make any changes in the life of the museum. By then the Romanian politics had already decided upon the future, and the drafts of a new law brought in by the Hungarian politicians of that time made no changes in the principles. The Hungarian Autonomous Territory, then the museum in Sepsiszentgyörgy were just stages on the way the final aim of which was annexion and assimilation.

With the nationalization an era of high importance was ruined, the museum and its managers were deprived of their rights to make decisions, and they were gradually driven onto that Romanian way, on which, denying their Hungarian being, they became means to the falsification of the Hungarian and Romanian history.

Székely Zoltán's person, activity and his deeds are not clarified yet. They can not even be, since the historical prospect for this does not exist yet. During Székely's activity everything happened what could happen in minority institutions. It was an extremely difficult situation because he, as the worker of the museum, could experience both the Hungarian past and the Romanian present time. And that Romanian present was totally different from the Romanian power characterizing the Csutak-era. Székely, in his thesis for the PhD degree, denied the Romanian continuity and it was him all the same who contributed to the demonstration of the theory of

continuity. He maintained very good relations with Romanian professional and political leaders. He supported the institution, he made efforts to give the work to Hungarian people, and in the meantime he organized the exhibitions illustrating the Romanian falsificated history. He was a comrade of Romanian communists and in the same time he was a Hungarian historian, too. He organized Ceausescu's visit, and with the money got from the state made excavations in the Hungarian cemeteries. The Archives were taken but the library of the museum remained. We can ask it by right? Who was Székely Zoltán? Who did he represent and what kind of interests did he serve? There are no objective answers to all these questions. There is only one fixed point which was brought to the surface by history. In 1990, the County Museum of Covasna surviving the socialist dictatorship became again an official Hungarian institution with a stroke of the pen. It is a fact that this was due only to that man who together with his team led this institution through all those years when the question was simply the following: to survive or to be wound up. His Szekler methods and attitude are undoubtedly controversial questions but the purpose of this paper is not to clarify it. My aim is to prove that the Szekler National Museum remained a Hungarian institution with firm roots what concerns its aims, history, tasks.

The history of the Scientific Library in Székelyudvarhely is not so colourful, is not so adventurous. It can not even be because it was a part of a school, and the history of an educational institution is never as eventful as the history of an institution which deals with complex tasks. Székelyudvarhely is a little Hungarian town, with a more modest history but it is not accepted by the inhabitants as being true. But it is a fact that Udvarhely was always a school town and it still is. It provided many kinds of learning for the szekler community. The Calvinist grammar school was a determinant institution in the life and history of this little town. Its library is unique, its fame is unquestionable, its value is inestimable. The teething troubles were the same as those somewhere else, the expectations and the principles of the Calvinist parish congregation were just like those expected from the library of the Calvinist school. Nevertheless it is noteworthy, because it kept and promoted its Hungarian roots, it was faithful to its original aims even in the storms of the history and just like its great companion, after the change of regime it turned back to its Hungarian and denominational limits. Its leading people were also determinant. In this case the formula is much simpler, because there was a man, called Gönczy Lajos, whose person was a kind of guarantee. He had been at the head of this institution for 40 years, so he was able to introduce those principles which were impossible to be annihilated. There is a likeness in Gönczy Lajos and Csutak Vilmos's personality. Both of them were teachers with solid principles and moral values. Both of them did

their best, led their institution according to their sense of vocation. Gönczy Lajos had less rights than Csutak, as the Calvinist Church dictated such terms which could never be exceeded. Everything was important for him which must be important for a man directing an institution. He was conscious of amplifying the school-library, he was aware of supplying the equipment stores of the school. Gönczy's social, professional and political relations were not so ramifying as Csutak Vilmos's. But their vocation was almost the same. Szeklerland is a relatively small territory, so these always meet somewhere sooner or later. The Calvinist college was in good professional relations with Mikó college, which for many years gave home for the collections of the Szekler National Museum. Gönczy Lajos employed Haáz Rezső as an art teacher, who later on established the Haáz Rezső Museum. This institution was the one, which, after a few decades, gave place to the library collection torn from the Calvinist college. The execution of the constructions are alike. The thought of establishing a new building in Udvarhely was born in the first years of the last turn of the century. They also asked the Hungarian state for help. They did not ask for little money since out of the half million crowns 490.000 was given by the Hungarian state. Being a Calvinist denominational school the college got no help from the town, in fact, a new conflict broke out between the church and the town what concerns the site managing. It can be said, that the situation was the same as in Sepsiszentgyörgy. Hardly had the school been inaugurated, and the library equipped, hardly had the teaching process started when the first world war broke out.

Székelyudvarhely is not near the Romanian frontier, so the Romanian invasion did not do so much damage as in the case of the Szekler National Museum. Gönczy left his job as a director right then when hard times began, but this was not deliberate, it was not an escape, only the time had come for him to retire. The change of empire brought its own changes here, too. The college, being a denominational school was relatively in a safer situation since the Romanian politics did not dare to attack openly the Hungarian churches. But the teaching in two languages was slightly appearing, the Romanian textbooks was gaining ground. But it is very interesting that no Romanian textbook from that time can be found in the library of the college. It is an institution of Hungarian establishment, it is surrounded by Hungarian population, it is under the protection of the church and though its situation is not simple. It can not even be because the profile is different, the interest is different, but the aim is common: to keep remaining Hungarians. This is more and more difficult because there are more and more Romanian students but this aspect is seen by Németh László in a too pessimistic way. Then another change again, 5 years under Hungarian authority. What happened? Nothing. The college returned to its original life as naturally as nothing had happened. In this period they made an attempt at publishing the bulletin which is again interrupted by history.

The nationalization here also broke everything on the wheel. Their names and foundations are taken away, their past and national consciousness were to be annihilated. They closed the library, there is no accession, no life, no tasks. Socialist methods are gradually penetrating into its life. It became a pedagogic high school, it had no official Hungarian relations, Kolozsvár is far, Budapest is much farther. But there are no fights and no debates, either, since it is senseless to fight for leadership. There is silence, and a relatively high professional level. There is silence in the library, and this silence is perhaps the token of surviving. The incunabula from Hungary are waiting for the possibility to be able to get once again into the centre of attention when their importance and values are appreciated. The directors of the high school were either Romanian or Hungarian, the timetable roughly reflected the Romanian expectations, but one thing is a fact: the school was always striving to keep the professional level.

In 1990, this institution, by a stroke of the pen, returned to its original way, among the Hungarian institutions. Was it by chance? Was it good luck? No. It was the result of the conscious work which was lying under the surface, in the principles, in the Hungarian speech, in the Young people who were learning in Romanian but thinking in Hungarian. The Hungarian consciousness of the 1000 years could not be destroyed during 60 years. The Hungarian history can be falsificated but not the Hungarian principles. Székelyudvarhely is now the capital of the szekler community, a town proud of being able to remain almost Hungarian in the years of conscious and planned assimilation. His very old schools are functioning in very beautiful buildings, his general education is of a high standard. It can deservedly be proud of its libraries, too.

These were the facts. How will it be in the future? The world has changed, the borders have come down, there are no space and time restrictions. The Hungarian population of the Carpathian basin still lives dispersed in different other countries. Living beyond the frontier is a fact, it can not be changed. But the question of the cultural autonomy is not just a vision. It's a possibility. There is the society with its possibilities. There are no boundaries in culture. The question of the autonomy is not in the least so simple, but to its realization there is need of will, idea, possibility, infrastructure.

The library of the Szekler National Museum might be connected to the national digital collection, but this is impossible without adequate infrastructure. The will does already exist, only the execution is missing. Perhaps the Hungarian state and the Ministry of Education had the historical possibility to help the institutions, collections of the Hungarian community beyond the frontier. Székelyudvarhely has already connected itself to the digital program, the working-up of the historical material is being done.